

## New Mexico Voters Statewide Strongly Oppose Proposals to Increase Cougar Trapping

A new statewide survey reveals by more than a three-to-one margin, New Mexico voters oppose killing contests and unregulated cougar trapping on state trust lands even as agencies claim these activities could increase state revenues, with strong majorities in every demographic group and political affiliation.

The survey also found that by more than a three-to-one margin New Mexico voters oppose cougar trapping on both private and public lands, and by the same margins oppose animal trapping in general.

State Rep. James Smith, R-Sandia Park, stated: "This proposal seems to be a method of circumventing what was defeated during the last legislative session. The public does not want to see the indiscriminate killing of cougars on public or private lands using inhumane methods, such as trapping. The State's cougar regulations should stay as they are."

Nicole Paquette, vice president of wildlife for The Humane Society of the United States stated: "New Mexico voters clearly value and appreciate cougars as icons of the wilderness and abhor cruel and unsporting practices that are harmful to cougar populations."

Two other prominent state legislators have also expressed concerns. Rep. Paul Pacheco, R-Albuquerque, stated: "My constituents expect management of the wildlife that is held in the public trust to be responsible and science-based. Changes made in cougar management policies should be supported by scientific evidence to ensure both the long-term conservation of cougars in our state and the safety of the general public who enjoy our public lands. Without a sensible permitting process, we undermine our own sound management of cougars."

Rep. Sarah Maestas Barnes, R-Albuquerque, stated: "My constituents care deeply about the humane treatment of animals. It is pleasing to see that most New Mexicans feel exactly the same way. There is no place for an expansion of cruel traps and snares in our state."

Animal Protection of New Mexico launched the Stop Cougar Trapping campaign, and gathered nearly 6,000 signatures addressed to Gov. Martinez in opposition to the Department's proposed changes on cougar killing.

APNM's Phil Carter stated: "It's clear that New Mexicans across the board are opposed to traps and snares and to killing more cougars, whether it's on public or private land."

The poll of 1,098 statewide New Mexico voters was conducted by Remington Research Group from Aug. 17-18, 2015. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percent. The survey was commissioned by The Humane Society of the United States.

## Background Information

Currently, the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish is recommending the following game management changes, as part of its 2015 review of the state Bear & Cougar Rule: a) allowing cougar trapping using leghold traps and snares on state trust lands; b) removing the permit requirement for private landowners to use traps or snares on cougar, and; c) allowing one person to kill up to four cougars a year. The state Game Commission, a seven-member body appointed by Governor Susana Martinez, is expected to issue a final vote on these proposals at the Commission's public meeting at Santa Fe Community College on Thursday, August 27.

This June, State Land Commissioner Aubrey Dunn submitted a letter to the department requesting the allowance of traps and snares for cougar on all 9 million acres of state trust land.

On New Year's Day in 2014, Terry Dubois, a Los Alamos teacher with 30 years' experience leading volunteer search & rescue operations with trained dogs, found herself in a critical situation. As she hiked with her husband, two friends and their dogs along an established trail in Los Alamos County, one dog, Jetta, was traumatically caught in a leghold trap. The steel jaws were so tight that it took the effort of all four people to remove the trap.

"Ever since Jetta was caught that day, I've been awakened to the dangerousness of traps, not just through the injuries the devices cause but in how my work with Search & Rescue dogs is threatened," said Dubois. "The proposal to allow traps and snares on millions of acres of land is an extremely dangerous and reckless betrayal of public safety needs in our state."

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Back in 2014, search and rescue dog Jetta was caught in a leghold trap on a well-traversed Los Alamos County trail. It took four people to pry the trap open.